
Information as a Factor in Public Acceptance

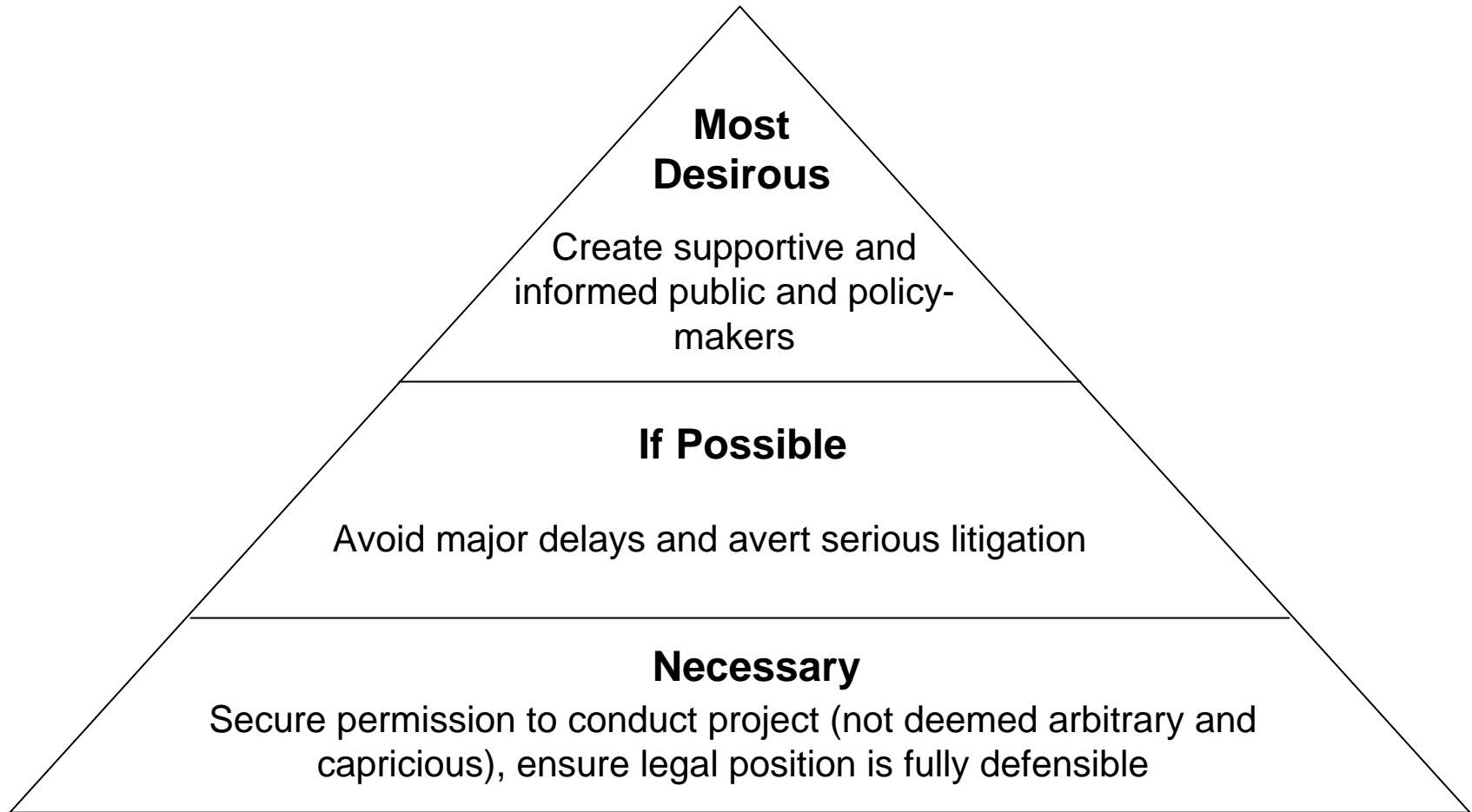
Assessing the Impact of Contextual
Information in Public Acceptance of
Carbon Sequestration Research Efforts

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Overview

- Approach to “Stakeholding”
 - Role of Public Acceptance in Carbon Sequestration
 - Project Description
 - Key Insights
 - Suggestions for Outreach
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A Hierarchy of Stakeholding Goals in the Face of Potential Controversy



When to Engage in “Stakeholding”

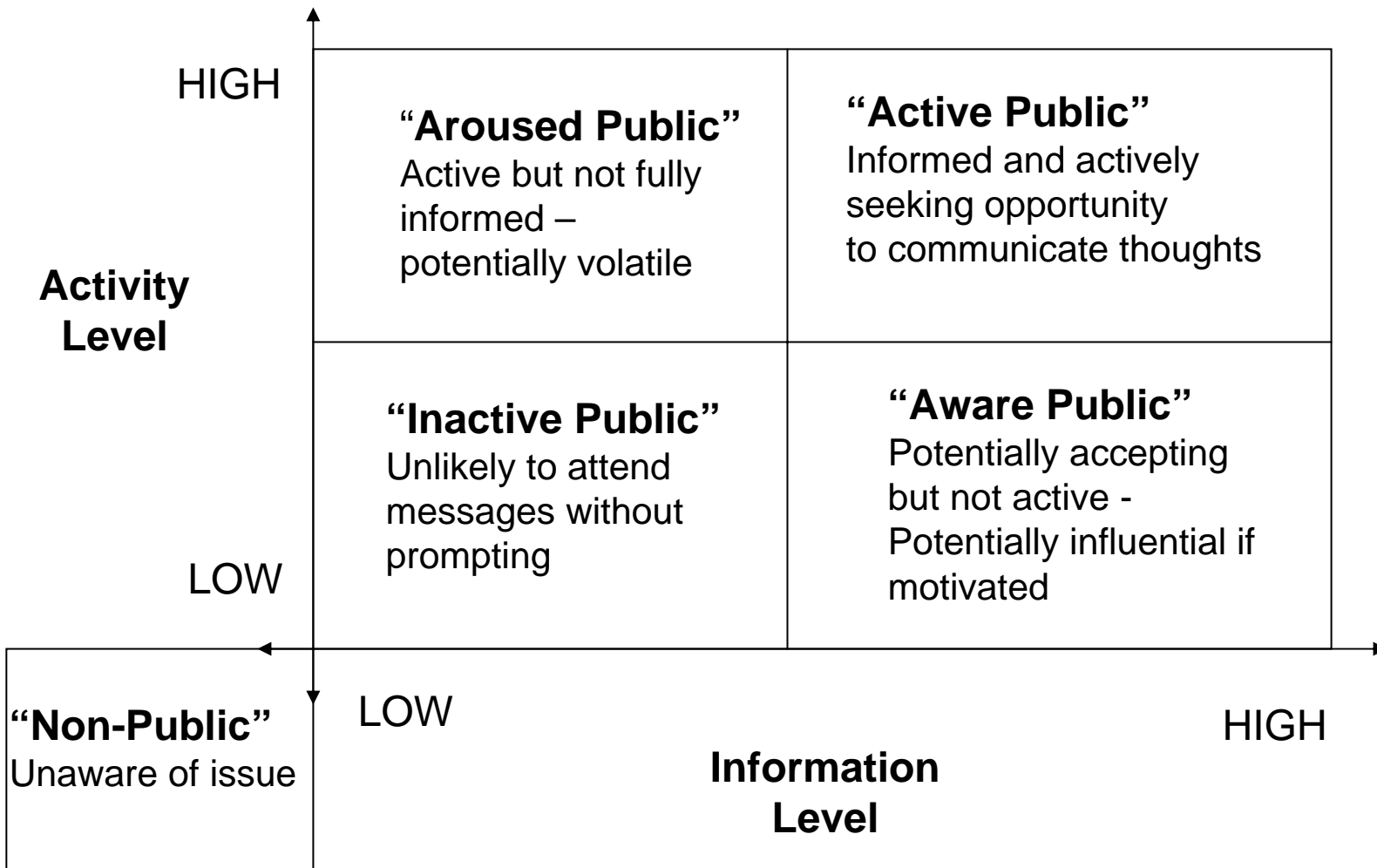
■ When is it the right thing?

- Required as part of project design
- Public opposition may delay or terminate project
- The problem involves potentially conflicting or competing public values and goals

■ When is it the wrong thing?

- There is absolutely no choice about what to do
- Those in charge of decision-making will not pay attention to public input
- Nobody cares about the issue

Evolution of “The Public”



Who is “The Public”

| Segment / Main Interest | Energy | Health | Economy | Safety | Environment |
|----------------------------|--|--------|---------|--------|-------------|
| Policymakers | “The Public” – a.k.a. Stakeholders are not monolithic | | | | |
| Environmental Groups | | | | | |
| Citizens | | | | | |
| Business Groups | | | | | |

Presumption: Public Acceptance of Carbon Sequestration Not A Given

- Public acceptance seen as critical, BUT...
 - Demonstrated ENGO concern about role of terrestrial sequestration in Kyoto negotiations
 - Current US clean air wars have not built “goodwill”
 - A relative few shut down the Hawaii ocean sequestration experiment
 - Carbon sequestration registers as “not on the radar screen” in surveys
 - Are we on a level playing field or a minefield?
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Keystone's Focus Group

- Theory: Given likely incremental nature of expansion in carbon sequestration, ENGOs based locally in states and active in clean air issues likely to be very influential in progress of carbon sequestration research projects
 - Objective: Assess level of information needed by ENGOs to feel informed and their emerging concerns based on that information
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Project Design

- Five State-based ENGO's from MW, W, NW, SE, Mid-Atlantic (oilpatch invited but unable to participate) in face-to-face session
- Operating rules: closed, not-for-attribution discussion; participants agreed to help meet stated objectives (not a blind focus group)
- Three 30-minute presentations by National ENGO, Research Institution, Industry
- Facilitated discussion of each presentation; feedback at end of day

Key Insights

1. Give Dimension to the Potential Benefit
 2. Recognize the Inherent Coal Conflict
 3. Local ENGOs Sensitive to National Policy Debate and Structure
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1: Give Dimension to the Potential Benefit

- Information about the magnitude of the challenge in addressing climate change seemed to have the greatest impact on participant views of carbon sequestration. Important messages:
 - The total amount of reductions needed is greater than can be delivered by any one technology alone – including sequestration and renewable energy
 - New coal capacity planned in the US but also in China, India and the rest of the world during each of the next three decades will swamp current “carbon budgets”
 - Referring to geologic sequestration as storage because: 1) viewed as more correct statement of the state of science and the “temporary” nature of storage, and 2) helped to differentiate between it and biologic sequestration
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2: Recognize the Inherent Coal Conflict

- In many states, ENGOs actively promote clean air through reduction in pollution from, or closure of, existing coal-fired power plants
- Supporting carbon sequestration implies supporting continued use of coal, perhaps by new IGCC technology
- These outcomes not mutually exclusive but characterized by cooperative relationship in the latter and an adversarial relationship in the former
- The divide between these positions requires careful navigation.

3. Local ENGOs Sensitive to National Policy Debate and Structure

- Participants aware of different NETL programs related to coal; expressed concern about role of sequestration given perception that several programs seemed to be working at cross-purposes
 - Participants eager to get answers about effectiveness and efficacy of geologic storage. Group clearly saw a significant problem (climate change) in need of answers and looked favorably on geologic storage research as a means of getting those answers.
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Factors Driving Negative Attitudes

- Health and safety concerns
 - NIMBY / BANANA
 - Political calculations
 - Competition for resources for alternative energy and technology
 - Questions about efficacy of carbon sequestration
 - Lack of immediacy of climate change threat versus other societal concerns
 - Delayed benefits, current costs
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Factors Driving Positive Attitudes

- (Acceptance of) Importance of coal to economy and energy security
 - Research as a search for answers rather than a herald of 'fait accompli'
 - Enormity of climate change threat and need for quick action
 - Likely incremental implementation of technology strategies
 - Carbon sequestration not offered as the silver bullet
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Suggestions for Constructive Outreach on Carbon Sequestration

- Engage the public early
 - Develop local groups of informed constituents
 - Broad contextual information leads to constructive discussion
 - Broad contextual information is boring, difficult to absorb quickly and requires confirmation from trusted sources –a big challenge
 - Outreach constructiveness directly related to the extent ENGOs know their efforts are meaningful and might actually influence decisions
 - The potential communication gap between technical and non-technical people can create a perception gap
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